

The Sun

WILLIAM M. LAFAN

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The Only Momentous Event.

A discussion is going on among our
 correspondents as to the cause or causes
 of a decline in Christian belief at this
 period of which they and many if not
 most other contemporary observers and
 philosophers think there are unmistakable
 signs discernible throughout Christendom.

Computations of the Sunday church
 attendance made last month at New
 York, London and Liverpool show that the
 great majority of the population of these
 towns neglects that form of religious
 observance; but we have no like
 statistics of former periods with which
 to compare them, so as to determine if
 there has been any recent diminution in
 church attendance and how much it is,
 relatively. Our Catholic correspondents
 assume a great falling off, and they interpret
 it as an indication and a proof of the
 inability of Protestantism to satisfy the
 religious cravings of mankind. Before
 they are justified in drawing any such
 conclusion from church attendance
 merely they must be able to present
 comparative statistics to show that similar
 neglect of religious observance does
 not exist in Catholic countries and great
 towns, or, at least, is proportionately
 less to a significant degree. According to
 the statistics obtained in New York by
 Protestant enterprise it is as large relatively
 among nominal Catholics as among
 nominal Protestants in the population;
 but so loosely was the enumeration made
 that on neither side can any safe inference
 be drawn from it.

Of one fact, however, there is a complete
 demonstration, and it is that never
 at any period in the history of this country,
 at least, was the celebration of the day
 commemorative of the birth of Jesus
 Christ so general, so jubilant, so
 impressive as it is now. The Incarnation
 as an historical fact is the central
 doctrine of Christianity. Without it
 Christianity would not be a supernatural
 religion at all, but merely a system of
 human morals and philosophy. By the
 side of the event celebrated to-day by
 Christendom as a positive fact all other
 events in the history of the world are of
 utter insignificance. What else can be
 of any essential importance in human
 annals if nineteen hundred and two
 years ago "the only begotten Son of
 God Himself, for us men and for our
 salvation, came down from Heaven and
 was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the
 Virgin Mary?"

It is true that a large part of Protestant
 Christianity refused to accept this particular
 day as the anniversary of the Incarnation,
 but of the Incarnation as an historical
 event there never was any Protestant
 dispute, except among the Unitarians
 who are representative. That God
 actually came down to earth and was
 made man is the belief on which the
 religion of Christianity rests, whether
 Catholic or Protestant. Moreover, the
 old-time Protestant aversion to the celebration
 of Christmas which found expression
 in New England within the memory
 of people still living is an ostentatious
 treatment of the day as purely
 secular by the performance of usual
 labor has passed away.

Everywhere Christmas has become the
 great holiday of the year by the common
 consent of Christendom, and its celebration
 is now as distinguished in the
 Churches which once rejected it as a
 veritable anniversary of the Incarnation
 made it the prime feast of the Christian
 year. Last Sunday we gave the elaborate
 programmes of Christmas music in
 Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian
 churches of New York. Practically, too,
 all the people render homage to the day
 as the foremost of festivals, even where
 they are without religious faith, Christian
 or other.

At least, formally, therefore, Christian
 observance is still maintained without
 diminution by the celebration of the
 Incarnation. The supreme importance
 of the Incarnation is recognized by all
 Christendom, so far, at least, as concerns
 the making of Christmas the supreme
 holiday of the year. And the manner in
 which the day is celebrated, in the making
 of free-will gifts, is still symbolic of
 the transcendent Gift on which Christian
 faith looks as an historical fact.

Christmas, writes a theologian in the
 Church Eclectic, is the celebration of "the
 most momentous event in the history of
 our race." If God came down to earth and
 became man it was the only really momentous
 event in human history.

Good Night, "Ladies!"

There are no more "lady teachers" in
 Chicago. The School Management
 Committee has revised the rules by
 substituting "woman" for "lady" in
 every case where the latter expression
 was found. The lovers of simplicity
 and natters of pretence will applaud the
 change. Those of us who were brought
 up on Scott and Cooper remember a
 whole host of elegant and lovely "fe-
 males." That phrase gave a little now
 and has a comic force. Every generation
 has its jargon and its affectations, and
 there is an affection of downrightness
 as well as of prime-lipped circumspection.
 Were the American women of the twenties
 and thirties of the nineteenth century
 as prudish of speech as Mrs. Trollope
 painted them in her "Domestic
 Manners of the Americans"? Due allowance
 must be made for the satirical intention
 of the observer. At the present day
 an affection for no means harmless,
 the habit of using coarse and plain

speech, is said to prevail among some
 women of high social pretensions in Eng-
 land and the United States. If JOSEPH
 ANDREWS is a little too good for human
 nature's daily food, Squire Western's
 brutality is not any less abominable.
 But some words excellent in themselves
 and their proper place grow
 wearisome after years of iteration.
 "Lady" has long needed a vacation.
 It has its proper sense and pertinent
 use, but it loses distinction and
 becomes almost ridiculous when mis-
 applied and overworked. It is a good
 old word, even if it has not the
 homely meaning of "bread-kneader,"
 which an etymology due to CARLYLE
 and RUSKIN gave it; but good old words
 may suffer in foolish mouths. "Lady
 teacher," "lady client," "lady doctor,"
 "sales lady," "lady stenographer," "shop-
 lady," "lady cashier"—here is too much
 place for "ladies." "Lady friend" was
 good enough for TENNYSON and may
 perhaps be defended as a savor of time
 and words, but we do not like it, "lady
 friend," and as for "gentleman friend,"
 it wears "pans."

When Mr. WILLIAM EVERETT wanted
 to have his little joke at the New Haven
 done he used today. At Yale, the Presi-
 dent's lady retired at Harvard, the Presi-
 dent's wife goes to bed. Perhaps this
 was rather a parable and example than
 a joke; and that accomplished scholar,
 good fellow and hater of the frayed title
 "professor" meant thereby to teach his
 freshmen to be simple of speech.

Perhaps it is useless to regret any-
 thing that has happened in the world of
 English words. There inexorable law
 of fate prevails; and it may be senti-
 mentalism to bewail necessity. Still, the
 ancient feminine such as "brewster,"
 "webster," "baxter," had their uses; and
 if there were a horrible-seeming word
 like "teacheress," "lady teacher" would
 not be. "Great Liddell and Scott" the
 conservative may cry; but "lady
 teacher" is a beauty and a boon by the
 side of such a horror as "teacheress." Very
 like. Habit is all, and the worst
 panhandler of a word may come to
 evening dress and respectability in time.
 Even in ushering "lady teacher" out of
 the Cook county schools let us not be
 too ill advised and sudden. Let us
 simply say we don't like it. An eminent
 prizefighter of this town "slugged in
 the eye" a stranger sitting opposite to
 him in a car. "What was the motive for
 the assault?" asked the Magistrate the
 next morning. "Aw, I didn't like his face,"
 said the man of war. An argument, philo-
 sophically considered, of wide and deep
 force.

In and about this town, where there are
 so many and many "ladies" and "gentle-
 manly" and "gentle" and so on
 on the example of Chicago should be
 profitable for reproof.

England's Education Law Pleases Nobody.

In its final form the Education bill for
 England, which has so long occupied the
 House of Commons, gives unmitigated sat-
 isfaction to neither of the great political
 parties. As amended with Mr. BALFOUR's
 consent, the measure is by no means
 what was hoped for by the High Church
 wing of the Anglican Communion, the
 representatives of which were the most
 zealous supporters of the original project.
 On the other hand, the Non-
 conformists, although substantial con-
 cessions have been made to them, still de-
 nounce the fundamental principle of a
 bill which will allow rate payers in a given
 community are taxed for the support of
 schools in which a sectarian religion is
 taught. The political philosopher, for
 his part, surveys with interest the out-
 come of the prolonged and heated
 discussion, because it proves that in
 the British Parliament the Opposition,
 though numerically weak to an almost
 unprecedented extent, has nevertheless
 proved strong enough to extort a com-
 promise.

Passing over minor proofs of Mr. BALFOUR's
 willingness to allay the anger of
 Nonconformists who talked of going to
 jail sooner than pay for religious teach-
 ing of which they disapproved, we come
 to the crucial amendment to the eighth
 clause of the bill, which was moved by
 Col. KENTON-SLANEY in committee on
 Oct. 31, and which was accepted by Mr.
 BALFOUR. This amendment provided
 that religious instruction shall be given
 in a school not provided by the local
 education authorities, in accordance
 with the tenor of the provisions (if any)
 of the trust deed relating thereto, but
 shall be under the control of the manager.
 Now, of the six managers, two are ap-
 pointed by the local authority, that is to
 say, by the County or District Council. It
 is obvious that, if these two appointees
 were Protestants, Nonconformists, and
 if one of the other four managers were
 a Broad Churchman, disposed to be
 with them, a High Church Anglican or
 Catholic clergyman might be checked as
 regards the kind of religious teaching
 he desired to give in a denominational
 school.

The belief that such would be
 the effect of the amendment was, of
 course, what commended it, not only to
 Nonconformists, but also to that large
 body of Anglicans in the Conservative
 party who are opposed to giving the
 Ritualists a free hand. Mr. BALFOUR's
 acceptance of Col. KENTON-SLANEY's
 motion provoked at the time vehement
 remonstrance from Lord EDMOND TALBOT
 on behalf of the Roman Catholics and
 from Lord HUGH CECIL on behalf of the
 extreme clerical party. As the motion
 was a surprise, however, the remon-
 strants were only able for the moment
 to muster 41 votes against 211.

When the significance of the amendment
 became generally known, a violent agita-
 tion arose among High Churchmen,
 who denounced Mr. BALFOUR as a
 traitor to the cause of religious education.
 The clergy would be insulted, they said,
 if the "priest" was no longer to be the
 sole judge of the religious instruction to
 be given to the children of his parish, and
 if he was to consult a committee of lay-
 men touching matters of faith. Blind
 to the fact that they were justifying the
 charge of the Nonconformists that the
 sole aim of the advocates of the Educa-
 tion bill was to hand children over to the
 priests, the Ritualist clergy came within
 a hair's breadth of converting a great

meeting at Albert Hall, which had been
 convened for the purpose of supporting
 the Ministerial measure, into a meeting
 for indignant protest against the Presi-
 dent's acceptance of an amendment
 which was looked upon as a Trojan horse.
 In the end, however, they accepted an
 assurance given to them by the Bishop
 of London, that, even with the Kenyon-
 Slaney amendment, the bill would prove
 better than nothing, and probably some
 means of working under it satisfactorily
 to the clergy would be found.

Naturally, the Nonconformists listened
 with complacency to the Ritualistic de-
 nunciation of the crucial amendment. If
 it be true, they say, that this amend-
 ment is a Trojan horse, so much the
 better. It is certain that, since the
 adoption of Col. KENTON-SLANEY's mo-
 tion, we hear next to nothing about or-
 ganized opposition to the execution of
 the new law, that is to say, of a concerted
 refusal to submit to taxation for the sup-
 port of denominational schools, which are
 henceforth saddled on the rates. All
 that Mr. BALFOUR has achieved, how-
 ever, by his compromise is the avoidance
 of a convulsive outbreak of lawless-
 ness. It is now probable that almost
 all of the Nonconformists will pay the
 addition to the rates which will be im-
 posed by the new law, but they will not
 resist it, and they will miss no opportunity
 of expressing their bitterness at the
 ballot box. The recent municipal
 elections in England and the Parliamen-
 tary elections for the Cleveland and
 East Teutish divisions have borne cumu-
 lative testimony to the Ministerial loss
 of popularity, and it now seems probable
 that the Education law will itself suf-
 fice to defeat the Unionists at the next
 general election.

Mrs. Grant and the Grant Tomb.

The letter which follows was written
 nearly eleven years ago by the widow of
 Gen. Grant to the late Gen. CHARLES
 H. T. COLLIS, and, of course, has never
 before been published:

"DEAR MR. COLLIS:—I wish to commu-
 nicate through you to the 'Chicago Record-
 Expositor' some words as to my husband,
 who is to be buried in the Grant Tomb, the
 plan of which I have seen. I am sure that
 you will be glad to publish them. My hus-
 band, Gen. Grant, suggested, whilst showing me
 the plan of the monument, that my remains
 should be placed in the same sarcophagus with
 those of Gen. Grant. This, he said, would be
 a fitting and honorable resting place for
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